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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CONVEYS SENSE OF URGENCY TO TALABANI,
URGES LEADERSHIP MEETING

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting July 21, the Ambassador told President Jalal Talabani that the U.S. Congress was out of patience. The Ambassador said the Congress needed short-term success to enable long-term partnership. He urged Talabani to help prepare for a leadership meeting between moderate party leaders. Talabani agreed to propose to his Vice Presidents and to PM Maliki that they decide on an agenda and then each designate an advisor to work out a compromise on all key issues, after which the party leaders could convene to give the agreement their final blessing. Talabani told the Ambassador that there would also be a group of four (KDP, PUK, ISCI, Da'wa) meeting the next day. Talabani said that three delegations from outside the group of four had come to see him and had approved of the group of four meetings. He told the Ambassador that Maliki should go to Iran to confront the Iranians on their interference in Iraq. Talabani also mentioned that the KDP and PUK had reached a memorandum of understanding that he would go to Kurdistan July 26 to sign. While Talabani was willing to support the presidency meeting, he seemed uncertain of its success. END SUMMARY.

Ambassador Conveys Sense of Urgency

¶2. (C) The Ambassador described to Talabani his 4 1/2 hours of testimony to Congress on July 19, saying that it was clear that many Members of Congress were out of patience. Recognizing this, Talabani asserted that the GOI must do something before September. The Ambassador told Talabani that the USG and the GOI needed to focus on the long-term nature of their relationship. The Ambassador emphasized that without short-term progress, the long-term relationship would be in jeopardy. A strategic partnership that brings assurances to all parties in Iraq is needed. He warned Talabani that there could be no relations with Kurdistan absent relations with the rest of Iraq. Talabani noted that Vice President Adel Mehdi was preparing a proposal along these lines.

3 1, Leadership Meeting

¶3. (C) Talabani told the Ambassador that the 3 1 (Presidency Council and Prime Minister) would meet the next morning, followed by a group of four (KDP, PUK, ISCI, and Da'wa) meeting that afternoon. Talabani hoped that the IIP would also join the afternoon meeting. He said that VP Abdel Mehdi had a good meeting with Vice President Tariq Hashimi, in which Hashimi agreed to participate. Talabani noted that he had also written a letter encouraging Hashimi's participation.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador relayed to Talabani that Barzani was ready to participate in a meeting of Iraq's political

leadership. Talabani agreed with the Ambassador's suggestion that the 3 1 discuss the meeting the next day and agree to an agenda covering all the major issues: de-Ba'athification, hydrocarbons, the package of Constitutional review suggestions, provincial powers, and provincial elections. Then the leaders should each designate a senior advisor to work out the details of agreement on this issue over a few days in isolation with their counterparts. Each leader should specifically instruct their designee to work out a compromise on all agenda items.

¶ 15. (C) After the advisors have reached or come close to agreement, the leadership meeting (comprised of the 3 1 and Barzani) could convene to work out the final details. Talabani nervously asked if they could also bring in Iraqiyya and others to this summit. The Ambassador suggested that adding more players would complicate the negotiations; perhaps the main players could agree first, and then bring in the others. Talabani again suggested that others should be brought in, this time from the Unified Iraqi Alliance (UIA). The Ambassador noted PM Maliki's preference to bring the UIA on board in stages, but said he would defer to Talabani's judgment. They discussed the possibility of taking any agreement to the PCNS.

¶ 16. (C) Talabani urged the Ambassador to convince Hashimi to be reasonable. He said the delegation that went to Erbil to see Barzani included CoR member Ayad Samarayee and was "more principled" than Hashimi. He noted that he was always mediating between the PM and Hashimi. Asked if he thought the leaders could identify an agenda and pick an advisor to negotiate he said that the PM would have a problem picking a good advisor. The Ambassador expressed concern that the two processes going on simultaneously - the summit and the group

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of four - not be linked. Talabani called for daily coordination between the Ambassador and himself to ensure that all these processes were successful.

Three Delegations Visit Talabani

¶ 17. (C) Talabani told the Ambassador he had received three parliamentary delegations while the Ambassador was visiting Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Masood Barzani in Iraqi Kurdistan: a delegation from Iraqiyya affiliated with former Prime Minister Allawi; a delegation from Arabiya Mustakila (a 12-member group within Tawafuq); delegation from Tahamun led by Muhammad Haydari and Qassim Daoud from the UIA (they claimed to have 10 members). Talabani said the Iraqiyya delegation promised to bring Allawi back to Iraq, but Talabani noted that Allawi previously had broken his promise to Talabani to return. (Note: The Arabiya Mustakila group numbers only six MPs and is not affiliated with Tawafuq. It is led by former DPM Abd Mutlaq al-Jaburi and most of its members are from his Jaburi tribe. It is likely that Abd Mutlaq al-Jaburi formed this group in the hope of securing a ministerial post in a government coalition that would exclude the mainstream Sunni Tawafuq party. End note.)

¶ 18. (C) Talabani said all 3 delegations supported the group of four and wanted to install good ministers. He said even the Sadrist had told him they wanted to join the front. According to Talabani, he replied that the Sadrist should look at the proposed political program for the front and decide if they could accept it. He also mentioned to the Ambassador that the Fadilah party had expressed interest in joining, but their spiritual leader Shaykh Yaqubi had harshly criticized the government.

Iran

¶9. (C) Talabani said the Iranians were insisting on meeting the Ambassador soon. Talabani thought that Maliki should visit Iran and share evidence of Iranian interference in Iraq with Supreme Leader Khamenei and Golchin. Talabani also thought it important that the Shia themselves confront the Iranians. He also noted that Maliki's trip to Turkey was postponed until after the Turkish election.

KDP-PUK Memo, Barzani to Baghdad

¶10. (C) Talabani mentioned that the KDP and PUK had reached agreement on a memorandum of cooperation. He asked Barzani to come to Baghdad to sign the memorandum. Barzani countered that Talabani come to Kurdistan on July 26 to sign it and then they would both return to Baghdad on July 27. He thought Barzani intended to stay 7-10 days to solve other problems.

¶11. (C) Comment: Talabani readily accepted the Ambassador's proposal that the Presidency and PM agree on an agenda for the leadership meeting and designate advisors to do the heavy lifting, but Talabani seemed skeptical that the meeting would produce quick results. Talabani noted that the PM, in particular, would find it difficult to designate a representative, and Talabani seemed reluctant to exclude other parties from the negotiations. End Comment.
CROCKER